

## « Music at the court of Dresden »



In 1694, Elector Friedrich August I of Saxony ascended to power and this became the starting point for the truly magnificent period of Dresden's musical history.

In order to attain the Polish crown, Friedrich August I converted to Catholicism in 1697 and subsequently dissolved the Hofkapelle and remodelled it into the Evangelische Hofkirchenmusik and the Churfürstlich Sächsische Capell- und Cammer-Musique, which was the main ensemble.

The latter ensemble gradually grew and had already in 1710 an orchestra equipped with the most up-to-date instruments.

Furthermore, the instrumentalists at the Dresden court were mostly just specialised in one single instrument (rather unusual at this time), which made the standard of musicianship exceptionally high.

After his Grand Tour of Europe, the crown prince Friedrich August convinced his father to form an Italian opera company in Dresden, a company which included some of the finest Italian singers of the day including the castrato Francesco Bernardi, also known as Senesino, and the wife of Johann Adolf Hasse, the soprano Faustina Bordoni.

Naturally, with such good prospects, many composers and musicians from all over Europe were attracted to the Dresden court. Their influence led to what Quantz described as the “mixed or German style”, a style with not just influences from France and Italy but also from the traditional music of Poland and Bohemia.

It was also greatly influenced by the popular “galant style”. Contrasting with the complex contrapuntal style, it was much simpler, with greater emphasis on the melodic line, a reduced harmonic vocabulary and a less important bass line

The composers we have chosen in our programme all visited or stayed in Dresden during these years of glorious music making.

The Bohemian musician and composer J.D. Zelenka arrived around 1711 and was first employed as a double bass player before starting to compose his own music.

Unfortunately, his music was never much appreciated by the Elector or his family and he never rose to the position of Kapellmeister.

His Trio sonatas were famous for their virtuosity.

Both Haendel and Telemann visited the court of Dresden in September 1719 for the celebrations of the marriage of Crown Prince Friedrich August to Maria Joseph, the daughter of Joseph I of Austria.

The high point of the festivities was three operas composed by Antonio Lotti, performed by the newly formed Italian opera company. The operas were performed in the newly built opera house which seated 2000 people, one of the largest in Europe.

We chose a fantasia by Telemann and the seldom performed Concerto a Quattro attributed to Haendel.

Another famous visitor was J.S. Bach. It has been suggested that Bach was one of the spectators of the opening performance of the opera *Cleofide* (composed by J.A. Hasse, who had just been appointed Kapellmeister) on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1731, and he was greatly inspired by, especially, the Italian influences in the music of Dresden. Bach also applied for, and was eventually granted, the title of court composer in 1735.

His beautiful aria “Meine Seele sei vergnügt” will close our program.

**PROGRAMME:**

**Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679- 1745)**

*Trio Sonata in c minor (Andante-Allegro-Adagio-Allegro)*  
(Originally for 2 oboes, fagott and basso continuo) 17'  
Rebecca Huber, violin  
Giuditta Isoldi, traverso  
Paulina Ptak, cello  
Hélène Diot, harpsichord

**Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)**

*Fantaisie for solo flute without bass, in A Major* 4'  
Giuditta Isoldi, traverso

**Georg Friedrich Haendel (1685-1759)**

*Concerto a quattro in d (Adagio Allegro – Largo – Allegro)* 10'  
Rebecca Huber, violin  
Giuditta Isoldi, traverso  
Paulina Ptak, cello obligato  
Hélène Diot, harpsichord

« *Künft'ger Zeiten eitler Kummer* » (from the German Arias) 5'30  
Andrea Tjäder, soprano  
Rebecca Huber, violin  
Hélène Diot, harpsichord

**Johann Adolf HASSE (1699-1783)**

*Sonata I für Cembalo (in Sib)*  
Hélène Diot, harpsichord

**Johann Sébastian BACH (1685-1750)**

*Aria « Meine Seele sei vergnügt »* (from the Cantata BWV 204) 7'  
Andrea Tjäder, soprano  
Giuditta Isoldi, traverso  
Hélène Diot, harpsichord